

Memorandum

To: Magdalena Berry

From: Katherine Wertz

Subject: *Article Comparison Memo*

Date: Friday, February 17, 2012

Lauran Neergaard drew upon Schwartz, Riis, Elbel, and Ariely's study, "Inviting Consumers to Downsize Fast-Food Portions Significantly Reduces Calorie Consumption," for much of her article, "Forget Super-Sizing: Restaurant Eaters Will Choose Half-Size Option." However, she also drew in material from research done by Brian Wasink at Cornell University and a study conducted by the National Restaurant Association. For the purposes of this particular memo, I will focus why Neergaard chose to base her story in part on Schwartz et al's research and why she might have chosen what she did.

Audience and Content Focus

Neergaard wrote her *Time* magazine article for a lay audience interested in improving their health but not particularly interested in the more academic side of the issue. This lay audience would have been especially interested in discovering potential new ways to curb calorie consumption, ideally with as little effort as possible on their part. Neergaard chose her content based on this audience, paying specific attention to the psychological eating tendencies the researchers analyze in their studies. She also made her tone much more conversational and approachable than the study, including several quotes and using casual phrasing.

She created a story on the issue of portion and calorie control, an interest of many Americans at present. As the Schwartz et al study focused on portion control and, more specifically, on a variety of portion and calorie control methods, it could easily both complement and contrast the Wasink study in Neergaard's article. Also, by including information from multiple studies, she adds more legitimacy to her article.

Information Included

Neergaard focused on the results, only giving an overview of the Schwartz et al study. She detailed the setting and briefly summarized the methods, even more fleetingly describing the results. She emphasized the fact that discounts and additional calorie labels did not seem to be effective, compared to 14% to 33% of customers who chose reduced portions when offered. Also, apart from adding a picture of a half-empty pie tin, she did not include any graphics.

Information Left Out

Neergaard omitted most of the methods section and skimmed over the results, including only those details which meshed best with the other studies in her article. She probably omitted more than she normally would have, as she was combining the results of multiple studies and therefore wanted to focus on those

details which would best contribute to her storyline. Too much detail would have bogged down her main point and hindered readability.

Conclusion

Neergaard chose to develop Schwartz et al's research into an article as it addressed a topic many people consider especially relevant due to the increasingly high level of obesity plaguing this country. She combined it with other research, picking out the details she thought would be most interesting to the sort of general audience at which her article aimed. Overall, she summed up Schwartz et al's study fairly well, though it seemed a little oversimplified at times, a byproduct most likely of the article form.

Citations

Neergaard L. Forget super-sizing: Restaurant eaters will choose half-size option. *Time*.

<http://healthland.time.com/2012/02/14/forget-super-sizing-restaurant-eaters-will-choose-half-size-option/>. Published February 14, 2012. Accessed February 16, 2012.

Schwartz J, Riis J, Elbet B, Ariely D. Inviting consumers to downsize fast-food portions significantly reduces calorie consumption. *Health Affairs*. 2012; 31(2): 399-407. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2011.0224.